

As a prelude to Flag and Anthem Day on March 18

Aruba's history retold through various events

ORANJESTAD - Since March 18, 1976, Aruba has been celebrating the official holiday, Flag and Anthem Day. Though the country did not achieve its "special status" within the Dutch Kingdom - making it autonomous from the other Netherlands Antilles islands - until ten years later, the pride Arubans have in their homeland has always been omnipresent. This year the National Holiday Celebrations Committee has organized various events which puts the spotlight on Aruban culture, its important personages, and its economic success of the last ten years.

Already, the commission has

helped organize special events in different neighborhoods - most notable was the recent cultural celebration held in Noord - and together with the National Library, Historical Archives, and the Institute of Culture, the commission has organized a "Status Aparte" exposition which is currently open to the public at the Maria Convent in Oranjestad. The exposition presents books, photos, newspaper clippings and paintings which retell the struggle for independence.

The goal of the commission is not only to foster Aruban's pride in their history, but to educate



A night of culture was celebrated this past Friday at the Noord Community Center. The evening featured presentations of Aruban dance, such as the traditional Aruban waltz demonstrated by the group, Flor di Trinitaria.

Photo by Debby Kelly

the island's youth about their unique heritage.

With this goal in mind, the commission has scheduled special events to take place up to the day of the holiday.

On Friday, March 15, every school will celebrate a "Day of Culture." For this day, teachers have assigned their students special exercises, such as speeches, plays, and song festivals all centered on the theme of Aruba and its customs.

Elementary students were also given the assignment of composing a painting about "Our Culture." These works are currently on display at the Public Library in Oranjestad and in San Nicolas.

High school students were assigned a poetry assignment on the same theme, "Our Culture." All the poems are to be judged and one student will be chosen to present his or her poem on March 17 at a public reading to

be held on Betico Croes Plaza.

School children will also be involved in the holiday by being honor guards during the celebrations to take place on March 18 in front of Prince Willem Alexander of The Netherlands, Minister of Antillean and Aruban Affairs Joris Voorhoeve, and invited government dignitaries from the Netherlands Antilles islands of Bonaire and Curaçao. □